

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention comprises a method and apparatus for securely
5 providing billable multicast data. The invention describes a solution that
provides an architecture for enabling different types of security devices
to operate interchangeably in very large consumer networks, corporate
networks, for authentication and metered access to services, as well as
payment. An embodiment of the invention comprises a mechanism for ensuring
10 that only authorized parties may obtain access to a particular data stream. For
example, the present invention provides a way build a restricted-channel system.
In a restricted-channel system, a multicast server transmits encrypted
information that can be deciphered by authorized multicast client programs or
multicast client programs operating under authorized conditions. Access to the
15 multicast data is allowed when the data is appropriately decrypted or otherwise
verified and/or the payment is obtained from a portable device such as a smart
card.

